



# Lower Wolf River Bottomlands Planning Newsletter

July, 2000

## Lower Wolf River Bottomlands Update

We would like to thank all of you for reviewing the draft vision, goals, and criteria for identifying conservation and recreation lands within the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands Study Area. In particular, we would like to thank those of you who attended the June 19, 2000 public meeting. We also appreciate those that took the time to send us their comments.

This newsletter includes brief summaries of the comments from June 19, 2000 meeting, on the draft vision, goals, and criteria for identifying conservation and

recreation lands within the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands Study Area, you'll also find the revised drafts, and an article on the next steps for the planning process.

### June 19th Meeting Overview

Over 50 participants attended the public meeting held at the Ellington Town Hall, in Stephenville. The purpose of this meeting was to review and discuss the draft vision, goals, and criteria. The vision and goals will set the framework for the development of management alternatives. The criteria for

identifying conservation and recreation lands within the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands Study Area will be used to draft boundary alternatives. The meeting also gave folks an opportunity to meet other interested participants and begin to develop a working relationship.

In general, participants liked the vision, goals, and criteria. The following articles provide summaries of the comments received.



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## Comments on Draft Vision & Goals

Below are a few of the comments from the public meeting on the vision statement and goals:

- Does Lower Wolf River Bottomlands refer to just the existing WDNR owned lands, or the larger study area.
- In partnership -- who's making decisions
- Who is "we" in we work
- "Compatible" does that mean to the resource, to other users or what. How is that determined?
- Goal comments included concerns regarding the types of recreation and potential misuse. Another comment was to prioritize goals.

To clarify some of these comments, let us start by reviewing the purpose of a DNR property master plan. A DNR property's master plan purpose is to describe how the property(s) will be managed, used, and developed; how it will look; and what benefits it will provide for at least the next 15 years. The master plan identifies the property(s) goals and objectives. It defines the recreational uses, forest, wildlife, and other land management practices, as well as other aspects of the property's future use and development. The Lower Wolf River Bottomlands master plan and process is unique in that we are looking at developing a master plan for more than one

property at a time. In addition, we would like the master plan to function in the landscape context of the Lower Wolf River. The *Lower Wolf River Bottomlands* refers to WDNR owned, managed, eased, or leased properties. This is not to say that other ownerships within or adjacent to the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands properties do not have a role in protecting, enhancing, and managing lands because they do. But this vision statement applies to this master planning effort for DNR lands.

Currently, the scope of this master planning effort includes DNR lands from the Shawano Dam to Lake Poygan but how wide

should it extend within the study area (the 21 townships) needs to be determined. This is one reason why criteria have been developed to identify conservation and recreation lands -- see criteria article.

A final master plan is only for DNR lands, if other partners/land owners are interested in using information or parts of this master plan they may. It is also important to recognize that these other partners/land owners play an important role in developing and implementing a master plan. The DNR has formed and continues to develop partner-

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ships with a variety of organizations, local groups, individual citizens, and other governments. This is what is meant by "In partnership with citizens". Also the "we" and question about who's making the decisions can be addressed by saying it is all of us involved in the master planning process. The planning team developed a public involvement plan in order to provide opportunities for you to be involved and give input. Your input has been used and will continue to be invaluable as we move through the planning process. It is the role of the planning team to continue a dialogue with the interested public throughout the planning process. It is the hope of the planning team to find agreement and consensus among the various interested parties. However, the DNR, through its citizen policy-making Natural Resources Board (NRB), retains decision-making responsibility and authority, including making

decisions on issues on which the interested groups or individuals do not agree. There are also sideboards in developing the master plan that we, the DNR, need to comply with such as state statutes and other laws, along with natural resource capabilities, and financial and other constraints. The planning team is in the process of developing and organizing information from inventories on endangered resources, recreation opportunities, etc. for participants to use.

In regards to clarifying "compatible recreation pursuits", this will be done when we begin drafting management alternatives. Although at this time, it is understood to mean what is most compatible with the natural resources. Strong themes in the vision and goals are maintaining, protecting, restoring, and enhancing the resources and recreation pursuits and educational opportunities are secondary. Therefore to prioritize the goals into a different order does not seem necessary.

## Revised Draft Vision\*

The Lower Wolf River Bottomlands will be managed recognizing the interconnectedness of air, water, and land in sustaining ecosystems in balance with local cultural and economic values. In partnership with citizens as stewards of the natural resources, we work to protect, restore, maintain, and enhance healthy, diverse ecosystems and the natural, scenic beauty of the corridor, while providing compatible recreational pursuits and educational opportunities for current and future generations.

## Revised Draft Goals\*

The land along the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands is protected through ecologically sound management decisions that reflect long-term considerations for healthy ecosystems.

The Lower Wolf River Bottomlands protects the quality and quantity of surface and groundwater resources.

All citizens share the responsibility for the stewardship of the natural resources in the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands for the benefit of current and future generations.

The public has opportunities to experience a diverse range of compatible outdoor recreational and educational activities that enhance the quality of life and economy within the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands.

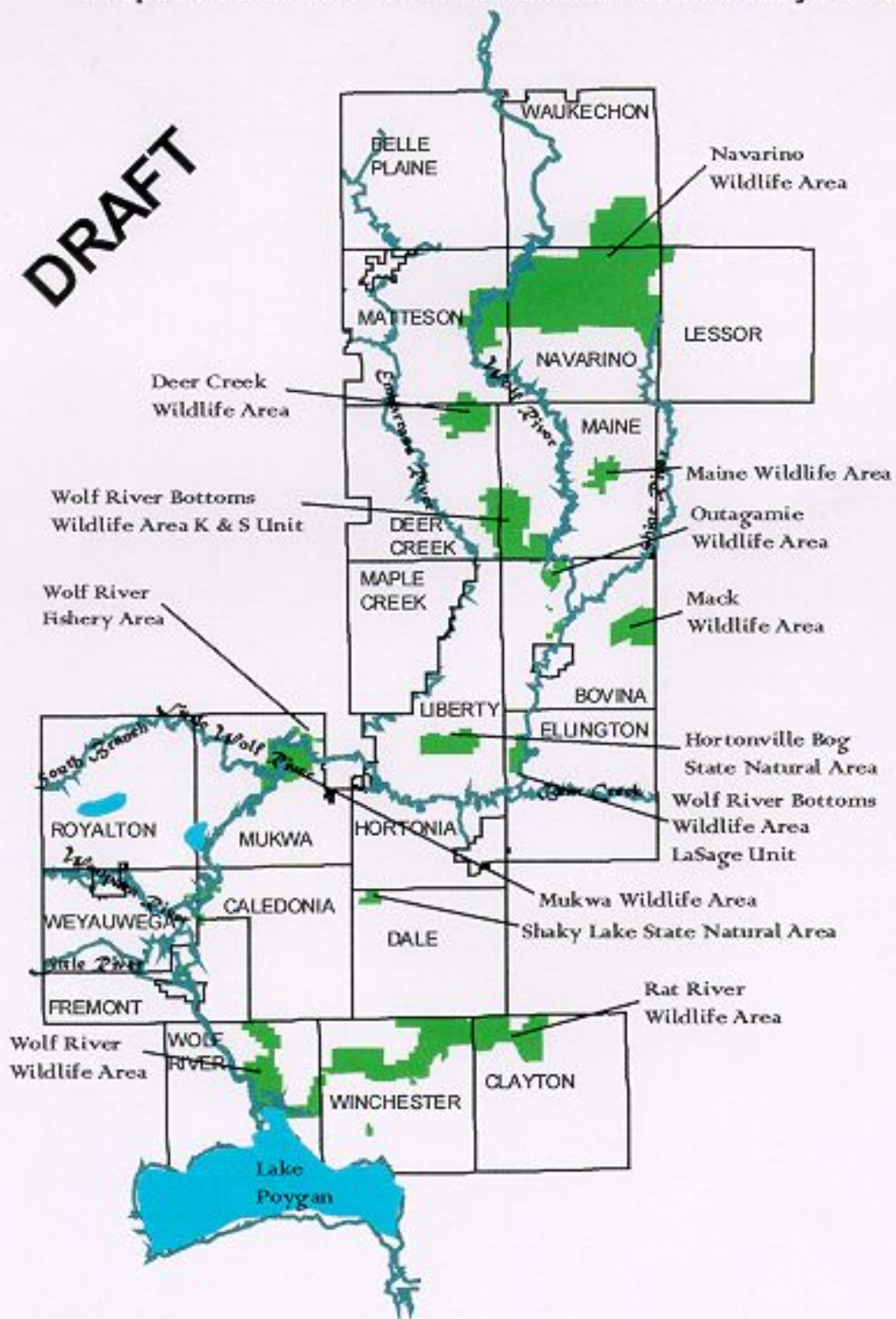
*\*Note no changes to vision or goals have been made at this time.*



Small work groups at June 19th Public Meeting

# Proposed Lower Wolf River Bottomlands Study Area

**DRAFT**



-  Townships
-  Major Wolf River Tributaries
-  DNR Project Boundaries

0 3 6 Miles

1:500,000



Map provided by WDNR Bureau of Drinking Water and Groundwater 10-14-89.

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## Comments on Criteria for Identifying Conservation and Recreation Lands within the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands Study Area

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In general the June 19<sup>th</sup> meeting participants thought that the criteria for identifying conservation and recreation lands within the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands study area were good. Below are some of the more predominate issues from the meeting.

- Consider acquisition options other than fee title.
- Concerns in protecting landowner rights.
- Preserving agricultural land is important.
- Many archeological sites in the area should be looked at.
- A joint protection in land use with towns and cities.
- Management should include partners (i.e. Ducks Unlimited, The Nature Conservancy, or other local groups).
- Concerns about shoreline erosion from boats — It was noted at the meeting that town boards are empowered to regulate speed and no wake zones.

The planning team's purpose of developing criteria for identifying conservation and recreation lands within the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands was to have a starting

place and common understanding of what things should/would be considered when drafting different project boundary alternatives. A project boundary is an area that shows where the DNR may be interested in acquiring land over a long period of time (from willing sellers). Often times other limiting factors will affect actual DNR ownership within a project boundary (e.g. availability of funds, landowners willingness to sell). The criteria were not developed to be used to set new zoning ordinances, create new laws, or infringe on a property owners rights within a project boundary. The criteria are meant to give a landowner some understanding why their property would be included in a project boundary. Using the criteria, science, and staff knowledge gives a proposed boundary alternative some rationale.

The DNR recognizes the strong value in partnerships and individual rights but realizes that sometimes opportunities arise where it is appropriate for the DNR to purchase the fee title to lands. The DNR will explore other methods of acquiring lands (i.e. easements, partnerships, land trusts, etc.) but at this point, it is too early in the process to know who will

participate or the tools that will be used.

Also, through this planning process, we will outline how any DNR acquired lands within a project boundary would be used and managed in the future.

The planning team recognizes and appreciates private property owner rights. It has and never will be our goal to take private landowner rights or land away. The DNR can offer a landowner other selling options (e.g. transferring development rights).

We would like to emphasize that the DNR does not condemn land rather we only work with willing sellers. Other groups such as The Nature Conservancy, the Northeast Wisconsin Land Trust, the county, townships, or developers could also be interested buyers. It is ultimately the landowners decision to decide if they want to sell their land and to whomever they want to.

Again, all we are trying to do is look ahead and give landowners, local units of government, other groups and organizations and the DNR flexibility and options in protecting, managing, restoring, and enhancing our resources for today and in the future .





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## Revised Criteria for Identifying Conservation and Recreation Lands within the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands (*text in italics reflect changes*)

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**Protect the Lower Wolf River and its tributaries river shoreline.** The area is seeing increasing pressures for development; citizens feel there is a need to protect the natural resources and scenic qualities within the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands.

**Provide an opportunity for a corridor connection for wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities.** Connection between open spaces are important for the biological diversity of many wildlife species and plant and animal communities. Recreational activities can also be provided *by* providing linear trails and increasing the size of properties to allow for more diverse activities.

**Provide opportunities for habitat restoration.** Maintaining, protecting, and improving the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands wetlands will provide for improved and enhanced water quality, shoreline protection, and wildlife habitat.

**Protect areas with endangered and threatened resources, and critical habitats.** For example, the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands corridor has been identified as the best bottomland hardwoods in WI. This area has a high potential for sensitive bottomland forest and wildlife species as well as many other significant natural features.

**Protect lakes with minimal development.** There are relatively few undeveloped lakes within the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands, protecting these rare resources will help preserve them for the future.

**Include spawning areas for protection and habitat management.** The Lower Wolf River provides spawning habitat for walleye and sturgeon, to enhance *these habitats* additional lands to buffer and connect existing areas should be considered for a variety of fish species.

**Improve the potential for fish and wildlife and other recreational/educational opportunities.** For example, expand the boundary along the Lower Wolf River corridor to include other lands because most of the existing wildlife areas are wetland, which limits access. Also, provide for additional shoreland access (i.e. shore fishing opportunities).

**Include larger tracts of land that promote ecological and/or recreational opportunities.** As demands for land increases for development, recreational pursuits, and wildlife habitat the affordability and availability of larger acreage's decreases. Larger, continuous parcels of land provide for better land management, recreational pursuits, and hunting and trapping opportunities.

**Improve boundary definition for better land management and public access.** Avoid trespass problems and user confusion about the location of boundary by expanding property boundaries to nearby roads, and establishing a more linear boundary where necessary.

**Preserve agricultural land.** When agriculture land is included within the boundary; creative options to keep farms in production will be explored. For example, conservation easements or purchase of development rights.

(Please note that text behind the bolded criteria are just meant to give a brief explanation of criteria.)

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## The Next Steps

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After comments were shared in the larger group at the June 19<sup>th</sup> meeting, the planning team explained that the next step in this process is to apply the criteria for identifying conservation and recreation lands within the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands Study Area. Meeting participants agreed that planning team staff should make a first attempt at drafting some different project boundary alternatives and then come

back and present these alternatives to planning participants. Therefore, over the next couple of weeks the planning team will draft some different project boundary alternatives and begin preparations for presenting the boundary alternatives at a September public meeting (a meeting notice and further information will be sent out a month prior to meeting).

If you have any suggestions, ideas, comments, or questions on boundary

alternatives please contact:

Jill Mrotek  
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Green Bay, WI 54307  
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mrotej@dnr.state.wi.us

Also, if you have any other questions on the comments received from the June 19<sup>th</sup> meeting please contact Jill Mrotek.

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**Do You Know Someone Who Might Be  
Interested In the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands Planning Effort?**

*Encourage them to be added to our mailing list by contacting:*

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WDNR  
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Website: [www.dnr.state.wi.us/master\\_planning/Wolf/](http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/master_planning/Wolf/)

*Thank you!*